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This reluctance must be regarded as one of the main factors responsible for the growth of the institution of 'borrowing land', which we have described in the preceding chapter.

Sowing and Planting

The Nupe, possessing an elaborate calendar system which works with six seasons and twelve lunar months, have no difficulty in determining the coming of the rainy season. Besides, they regard the appearance (in April) of a small red insect, which is significantly called *gbama*, 'early rains', as a sign of the approaching rains. The first light showers, which as a rule are accompanied by thunderstorms, are ignored. After the first heavy rain, which may last for several hours or a whole night, has thoroughly softened the soil, village and town spring into activity. In the morning after the rain you will see the people wandering out to their fields. They walk in groups, neighbours or families together, fathers with their boys. Dogs trot behind their masters, and often a man or boy will lead a goat which will then feed on leaves and shrubs on the field. The men wear working dress: a loin-cloth and, if it is cold, a heavier cloth slung round the shoulders, and a straw hat as protection from the sun. They carry their hoe over the shoulder, and gourds with water, food and seeds, over the arm. In many parts farmers carry their bows and arrows with them when they go out to their fields as 'protection from wild beasts'—a habit which is dying out but slowly, although there is hardly any need for it to-day. I have never seen these weapons used.

The nature of the first farming activity depends on whether or not the farmer has done what 'good' farmers are expected to do, namely, planted his yams already in the rains, immediately after the harvest. If he has not done so he will now at once start preparing his yam field; if he has, he is free to turn his attention to the planting of bulrush-millet and maize. Of five farmers whose daily activities I was recording in Mokwa, three had planted yam in the rainy season and two (who both had to work single-handed) waited until the beginning of the new farming season. With the 'good' farmer, we will start with the planting of millet.

Again there are certain variations. Where millet and sorghum are planted as successive crops no hoeing or re-hoeing as a rule precedes the planting; as we shall see later the plots are normally prepared during the previous season. Where millet and sorghum are planted after other first-year crops or on a new plot, ridging, occupying the first few days of the new season, precedes the sowing. The technique of planting, moreover, varies slightly according to whether one plants on mounds or ridges, but is the same for both millet varieties and for sorghum. I will now describe the scene one will meet on the Nupe fields when planting is in progress. The farmer has divested himself of his superfluous clothing, his food and water gourds, and has placed his things out of the way, under a shady tree. Perhaps he has his small boys with him, whom he lets play by themselves in a corner of the field while he goes on with his work. Tied to his left arm the planter carries the seeds in a small

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men are always ready to try their hand at something new, and changes of profession are frequent. The record is held, perhaps, by a Bida man who started as a mat-maker (the occupation of his older brother), changed over to cushion-making, then to tailoring, and eventually to leather-work, which he found more lucrative and which he is practising at present. *Efakó* co-operation on the narrowest basis, between father and unmarried sons, occurs occasionally. Thus in a family of embroiderers a father and two sons worked together; working on the same gown, the father would execute the more elaborate designs, while his two sons carried out the simpler embroidery; the sons were maintained by the father, and all earnings went to him. With simpler kind of work, this co-operation is reduced further, and we find, for example, this arrangement between a father and his unmarried son, both straw-hat makers: the father took half of his son's earnings, and in return maintained him, and would in due course pay part of his bride-price (he would be unable to bear the full expense). But in the majority of cases this rudimentary co-operation, too, disappears, and even unmarried sons work entirely on their own.

One might wonder whether these 'individualistic' crafts have not, at some previous stage, shown a larger measure of co-operative organization. Remembering the weakening of guild-organized crafts under the pressure of modern conditions, we might, in fact, ask whether the individual crafts as we find them to-day do not represent merely a final stage of that incipient disintegration. This is indeed the case in one of the industries practised to-day as individual crafts—leather-work. Leather-work involves specialized technique and skill in much higher measure than do the other individual handicrafts. But it also used to involve comparatively large-scale co-operation of a group of workers, in the sense of an efficient division of labour, which was meant to ensure the execution of large and frequently urgent orders. A guild-head, called *Magaji*, organized and controlled group production; he also acted as the official intermediary between the craftsmen and the king, who was, again, their most important customer: for the Bida leather-workers supplied a large proportion of the military equipment of the Nupe army, such as saddlery and leather shields, sword-sheaths, and quivers for arrows.

The individual craft which is most a product of modern conditions is machine-tailoring. It introduces certain new features into the productive system of Nupe which are of special interest to the student of culture contact. Machine-tailoring does not demand long training or special skill—young men learn to use a sewing-machine in a week. The machine-tailor can reckon with a very constant demand for his services. The number of machine-tailors in Nupe has, in fact, greatly increased even during the periods which I spent in the country. In 1936, for example, I found six sewing-machines in Kutigi market, against three in 1934. Machine-tailors, like ordinary tailors, will regularly visit village markets (walking perhaps ten miles or more, carrying the sewing-machines on their heads), and appear in villages a fortnight or month before an annual festival, when their services will be greatly in demand.

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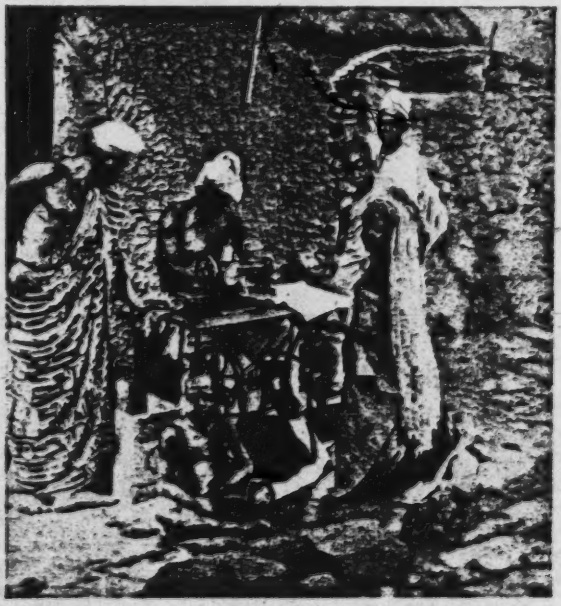
MAT-WEAVERS ON THEIR WAY HOME FROM THE FARM



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A MACHINE TAILOR

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either for oneself or for one's family. One young labourer from the country gave his father 5*s.* out of his weekly wages of 7*s.* to put by for his bride-price; another kept 2*s.* to 3*s.* a month for himself, and gave the rest to his father. Many Bida labourers, on the other hand, used the whole money for themselves; some explained that they had become labourers because there was no money in their old profession, others because they wanted to be independent and because their fathers or elder brothers could not give them as much money as they liked to have.

To summarize: as one would expect, paid labour, especially temporary labour, does not represent a 'real' profession in the sense of an occupation involving special training and selection of workers. It is essentially a stopgap occupation chosen to supplement or replace a failing normal source of income. Owing to the specific composition of Nupe society the new profession is being adopted by certain social groups and strata more than by others. Yet in some respects paid industrial labour must be regarded almost as a modern continuation of forms of occupations which, in the traditional society, bore the same supplementary and stopgap character. As such it appeals strongly to the individual craftsman, to Mallams, and *bara*, who depend for their livelihood on similar forms of unskilled and partly temporary work. It differs from these other occupations, however, in that it is carried out on the road and in the workshop yard instead of in the home, and that it represents heavy manual labour, and not light work which it is easy to combine with a dignified social status. The labourers, unlike the individual craftsmen, can no longer pretend that they belong to the leisured class. If they receive better and more regular pay, they also lose caste. This explains why of the many hundreds of men who, once members of the privileged classes, are to-day men 'without occupation',[1] gaining a precarious livelihood from occasional work, only those coming from the lowest grade of the 'upper classes' have chosen the profession of labourers.

In the case of the peasants we can no longer speak of any inherent congruity between their work and the new temporary occupation. To them, especially to the peasants who do not practise a handicraft beside agriculture, paid labour in addition to farm-work, a form of labour, moreover, which keeps them for months from their homes, must appear as something quite new and unprecedented. If to-day paid labour is gradually attracting the peasant class as well, twenty or thirty years ago the (very prosperous) Nupe peasants had to be coaxed by all available means to undertake temporary paid labour, for example, in railway construction. The more 'sophisticated' Hausa and Yoruba were already then flocking in large numbers to work of this kind. Missionaries who knew Nupe country at that time told me that it was often impossible in the peasant districts to obtain even porters to carry loads; the promise of money did not attract them sufficiently to make them leave their homes even temporarily, to upset their whole routine of work or forgo their well-earned leisure. In certain backward and prosperous districts this

[1] An unofficial occupational census of Bida lists 1,130 men under the class 'no occupation'. They belong without exception to the titled leisured classes of the Emirate.

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attitude has still survived: when I trekked through the country round Sakpe in 1936 I found myself in the same predicament, and although it was in the dry season and farming was at a standstill, I had eventually to agree to women carrying my loads as men were not available for this task. That the appeal of paid labour as a seasonal occupation for peasants is rapidly gaining ground cannot be doubted. The stopgap occupation can, in fact, be said to satisfy a definite want in present-day peasant economy.[1] The strength of its appeal still varies greatly locally. The large majority of the peasants whom I found employed as labourers in the construction of Badeggi bridge were local men or men from the neighbourhood of Bida. Of 19 labourers 14 came from Badeggi itself, 3 from hamlets near Bida, 1 from Kacha, 1 from a village farther afield (Jima), and none from Trans-Kaduna. The local selection does not merely reflect varying degrees of progressiveness or 'sophistication'; it also reflects the varying urgency of the wants for the relief of which paid labour is undertaken. The nature of these wants we shall discuss in detail later.

[1] To-day many Nupe peasants are ready to try any kind of paid labour, but will abandon it quickly if it falls short of their expectations of a regular and substantial income. Thus the Nupe of Leaba tried their luck in gold-washing, which is carried out on a considerable scale in that district. They had heard from Hausa labourers that one could make as much as 9*d*. or 1*s*. a day in this work. They had not realized, however, that the payment was not per day, but depended on the amount of gold which the individual worker can produce. As the Nupe were rather clumsy and slow, unlike the experienced Hausa labourers, their pay was small and irregular, and, gravely disappointed, they soon gave up gold-washing.

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We will begin our study of the marketing system of Nupe with the study of the village market.

No Nupe town or village is without its market and its regular market-days. Larger places hold their markets once a week; smaller villages every fifth day (irrespective of the seven days' week). This arrangement, illogical though it may appear, is well adjusted to the needs of the country, where local transport is still to a large extent by porterage. It enables more people, and people from more distant places, to attend the markets in the bigger villages. I estimated the attendance of the big market at Kutigi, a village of 3,000 inhabitants, at from 400 to 500. The distance from which people come varies considerably. Kacha market, the largest market after Bida, attracts men and women traders from the capital, forty miles away. In Kutigi I met women traders from Lemu, which is thirty miles from Kutigi, who were selling pots made in Gbari country, another fifty miles north. Professional, full-time traders, men and women, regularly attend all the larger markets in the country, stopping in one village for five or six successive market-days, and then moving on to another place. The peasant women, on the other hand, who practise trade only as a 'side line' and whose marketing is concerned chiefly with the disposal of the produce from their houses and their husbands' farms, rarely attend markets which are more than six or ten miles from their home. These small circles of inter-village exchange form no less part of the comprehensive marketing scheme of the country than do the extensive journeys of the professional traders. For the system of local exchange areas is partly subordinated to the main axes of trade and traffic. We find an organization almost of relay stations, half-way houses of exchange, situated all along the main trade-routes of the country, above all on the roads leading to the capital.

On the western road to Bida from Wuya (which is 12 miles from Bida) there are three such 'relay stations', used for the different kinds of produce of which Bida is constantly in need. Duzko Wuya (lit. Market Wuya) on the right bank of the Kaduna is used by the women of Batati, a village fifteen miles inland, for trading their cotton to Bida traders whom they meet at this place. Zantica, six miles from Bida, and Lumanla, four miles from Bida, serve as exchange places for agricultural produce and firewood, which goods are brought to these places by the local women, and then bought and carried to Bida by traders from the town. A similar arrangement, with regard to yam and other farm-produce, obtains on the northern road to Bida from Lemu; the 'relay station' is a tiny village half-way between Lemu and Bida, the only importance of which lies in its use as an exchange market.

Similar relay systems which exist in the river area, following and branching out from the water-ways, serve as centres for the extensive trade in smoked fish. Here the local exchange circles are primarily determined by the varying conditions of transport. Thus the wives of fishermen on the lower Kaduna take their fish (already smoked) in their small canoes to the nearest riverside market, e.g. Jima or Muregi. Here a wholesale trader from Jebba buys up fish in large quantities, takes them, again by canoe (this time a large river-going canoe) to Jebba market, and sells them to another wholesale trader who will transport the fish (by rail or lorry) to the final destination—the inland markets of Bida,

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A WOMAN TRADER SELLING HER HUSBAND'S SILVERWARE

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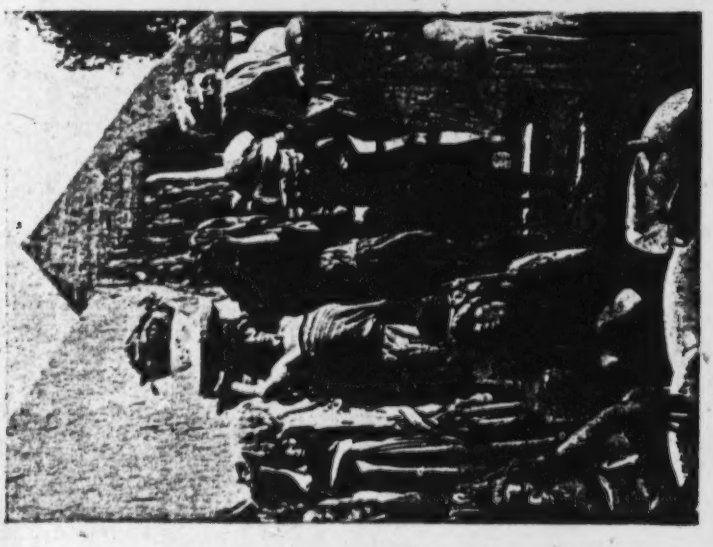

A FOOD MARKET

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